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ABSTRACT

Selected literature illustrating programs undertaken by consortia in higher education is reviewed in the following categories: (1) Expanded Curricula and Research Projects; (2) Faculty and Manpower Development; (3) Community Enrichment Programs; (4) State, Regional Planning and Coordination; and (5) Expansion of Services and Facilities. The author cautions that, although the consortium is an idea whose time has come, it is not a panacea for solving the problems facing postsecondary education today. While there are significant barriers to inter-institutional cooperation in higher education, they can be overcome and consortia can be useful in solving problems and instrumental in effecting change in higher education. A bibliography is appended. (RL)

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CONSORTIUM ACTIVITIES

IN HIGHER EDUCATION

by:

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CENTER FOR COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

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INTRODUCTION

Distinct, unique, diverse, autonomous; until recently these were the terms of the chroniclers of American higher education. As James Perkins noted..." the idea of university autonomy - of the sanctity of academic pursuits - is as old as the idea of the university itself;...it has been the conceptual garden of academic freedom, the moat around the city of intellect whose drawbridge will lower only in response to internal signals". (1967)

Apparently in the last few years, these signals have been executed. The explosive growth of voluntary academic consortia seems to indicate that the United States has entered a reverse historical phase which seems to heartily embrace inter-institutional coordination and cooperation as a necessary event. (Bradley, 1971) The 1973 Annual Report of the American Association of Commumity and Junior Colleges advocates such cooperation, and indeed, the American Association for Higher Education lists over eighty consortia involving some 797 member institutions. (1973)

The breadth of cooperation within consortia is extremely wide-ranging in scope from twenty-six member all-encompassing general purpose cooperatives to single study research grants invloving as few as three institutions. For the purpose of this paper, the multitude of consortia activities discussed

shall be grouped into five categories: 1. expanded curricula and research projects; 2. faculty and manpower development; 3. community enrichment programs; 4. state and regional planning and coordination; and 5. expansion of services and facilities. It is hoped that this form of write-up shall provide the reader with both a comprehensive overview and a better understanding of the focus of recent consortium activities in American higher education.

EXPANDED CURRICULA AND RESEARCH PROJECTS

In a recent AAC/JC survey, the highest number of consortium activities reported fell within this first general academic category. (1973) Great diversity in both focus and scope exists in the following inter-institutional projects.

The University of Texas - Austin has just completed a computer assisted instructional program package in seven areas: mathematics, social science, physics, chemistry, biology, and economics. Presently available for test purposes at five computing centers nation-wide, these learning packages provide college students with self-paced instructional packages of high calibre as viable alternatives to traditional semester based courses. (Warlich, 1973) The School of Medicine at North Carolina University pursued a similar course of action, and following development is now implementing self-instruction materials packages at twenty-eight consortium member institutions. These packages provide a self-paced, inexpensive method of teaching selected medical courses which have clearly defined goals and objectives. (Johnson, 1973)

The Worcester Consortium came into existence primarily because Clark University students in bio-medical engineering could benefit by the extensive electronics and mechanics courses offered at Worcester Polytechnical Institute, and equally

important the students enrolled at WPI in engineering needed the biology and medical technology courses held at Clark. The Worcester Consortium has now grown to a general purpose co-operative with ten member institutions; shuttle buses, cross registration, faculty exchange programs and common 4-1-4 calendars among the institutions have resulted since 1967. (Fox, 1973)

An undergraduate cross-registration system was adopted by the Associated Colleges of the St. Lawrence Valley after an intensive study of financial, eligibility, credit, and general requirement considerations among the member institutions. Latent benefits which resulted from this coordination of efforts along with a broadened curricula are: common course numbering, single catalogue of courses, combined course scheduling, and simplified academic approval methods. (Grupe, 1973)

If higher education is to properly serve the purposes of the State, it can do so only to the extent that it draws upon the larger world of learning for its resources. American colleges by offering international studies programs in consort with institutions abroad, effectively accomplish this task. The Carnegie Commission notes a definite decline in funding of such international programs as American colleges have become increasingly pre-occupied with the civil rights, environmental, inflation-recession domestic problems of the late sixties and early seventies. Even with the deep skepticism

about such programs, the Commission reported the existence of 110 consortia involved in a total of 211 international programs and offerings. (Sanders, 1974)

Research projects in higher education oftentimes too great in scope or cost for a single institution become the results of a consortium effort. Attrition studies at Wilkes Community College and an institutional awareness survey were results of federal monies awarded to the Appalachian Developing Institutions Consortium. (Roesler, 1971, 1972) The development of a valid computerized model to enable educational systems to continuously monitor and research the educational needs of a community and develop quantitified data for decision making was the major irtent of a consortium of community colleges in Florida. (Tucker, 1973) Other projects of significance from the seven institution Central Florida Community Colleges' Consortium formed from a three year Title III OEO grant are:1.Institutional Goals Setting Model; 2. Management-Administrative Survey; 3. Community Awarenes Survey; 4. Faculty Evaluation Model; 5. Employer Needs Survey; 6. Student Characteristics Survey; 7. Student Follow-up Survey. (CFCCC, 1973, 1974)

Another method for funding consortium activities is for colleges to pool resources to sponsor research beneficial to all. The Florida Community/Junior College Inter-Institutional Reseach Council (IRC) serves twenty Florida institutions with a central staff located at the Institute of Higher Education,

University of Florida. Each member college is assessed $1.00 X FTE (Full-time enrollment) plus $1000 per year for continued membership. Projects as the recently completed "Student Personnel Study" have results which may be generalized easily to all institutions of higher education. (Nickens, 1974)

FACULTY AND MANPOWER DEVELOPMENT

Over the past few years, many consortium activities have focused on faculty and management development programs as a method for effectively improving the style and quality of instruction and related services at their institutions. Now some of these studies are generalized and may be adopted by non-member schools to further their own faculty development efforts.

A consortium of ten institutions in New Jersey in co-operation with Montclair State College have designed a program to better the teacher education programs at the member schools. Five major objectives were established and have proven effective: 1. develop a structure to establish a close relationship of the colleges offering teacher education programs; 2. increase the reasearch capabilities of the faculty through inter-institutional programs using institutional-wide facilities; 3. complete dissemination of information among member institutions; 4. identify the individuals and facilities to aid in the research process; and 5. encourage consortium-wide research activities. (Ambry, 1972)

A competency based teacher education program has been developed in Oregon; the design focusing on six inter-related specific areas of the Comfield Model Teacher Education Project. This personalized, field centered, consortium operated

system has proven to be of significant value in the evaluation and further development of faculty within the State. (Oregon College of Education, 1973)

In Illinois and in New York consortium research projects and on-going programs demonstrating successful education practices and materials exist for the sole purpose of improving inservice training to faculty and administrators. The New York State Department of Education has also sponsored research studies which have concluded that the establishment of a consortium of colleges of education is the most desirable future state for the governance of teacher education programs, and furthermore, inter-institutional collaboration is essential in establishing performance based teacher evaluation. (Alton Community School District, 1970; Darcy, 1974)

A seven institution consortium in Alabama including the University of Alabama and Alabama A and M took on the task of developing training programs for chief academic and adminstrative officers. Areas where the program is presently concentrated include: 1. visual and performing arts; 2. curriculum planning and international program development; 3. computer services; 4. library services; and 5. public relations. The extensive and broad based research and training efforts of this inter- institutional group has in reality brought about the existence of another general purpose consortium. (Alabama Consortium for Development of Higher

Education, 1972)

The Greensboro Tri-College Consortium now broadened in scope since its formation in 1968, had an initial goal of providing joint department meetings, curriculum workshops and faculty meetings among the three small, private liberal arts member institutions. Fostering the exchange of ideas, research activities and experiments through cooperation and open communication has resulted in less duplication of efforts, superior faculty morale, and better professional growth among the faculty and administrators. (Eko, 1973)

COMMUNITY ENRICHMENT PROGRAMS

The benefits of consortium activities oftentimes are indirectly realized by the member insitutions' community, and in a growing number of instances community enrichment has been cited as the major reason for the initial establishment of the inter-institutional coordination.

The cooperation of several educational institutions within the Philadelphia area brought about a change in the employment patterns in the construction industry, and demonstrated a model of inter-university co-ordination in facilities planning. Over-all goals achieved in this project were: 1. better equal-opportunity practices by increasing both job and training support for non-whites; 2. an increase in support for minority contractors, and 3. the demonstration of a university model for planned social change. (Pennsylvania State University, 1973)

Irrespective of state boundaries, junior colleges in Alabama and Mississippi have banded together to collectively deliver better educational services to the low income students in the rural community, offer more community programs and better serve the marginally prepared. As a direct result of the Consortium's activities, legislation at the State level was passed which enables Alabama teachers to take credit courses and certification requirements at any

of the community college campuses, thus not having to travel great distances to the State Universities. (Rural Junior Colleges' Developing Consortium, 1973) Cultural enrichment to rural communities was a major function of North Carolina's Six Institutions Consortium. Specifically, the areas of social science, literature, arts, human and life science were concentrated on and programs in African and Afro-American studies were instituted. Concerts, lectures, art exhibitions and museum collections were recruited and funded to bring cultural breadth to the community. (Eko, 1973)

Initiated prior to World War II for the "advancement of cultural activities in western Massachusetts", Five Colleges in Amherst began one of the earliest educational radio and later television stations in the country. Art exhibitions, concerts, speakers, and monies for library acquisions - all sponsored by the consortium - have added significant cultural impact to this still somewhat rural area. (Five Colleges, 1973)

The unique makeup of the Five Colleges Consortium, three private colleges and the University of Massachusetts, in 1965 conceptualized and then created de novo Hampshire College as an experimental, liberal institution (thus the name of the consortium) to offer an alternative to the rather traditional educational approaches at the other member institutions. Five Colleges has become a model for general purpose inter-institutional co-operation and over its long lifetime has initiated

cross registration plans, shuttle buses, joint faculty appointments, library co-operation, five Ph.D. programs, inter-institutional policy making, and the establishment of a common department of astronomy. The Consortium budget for 1970 was just under one-half million dollars and co-operation among the institutions is better than ever. An interesting note, is that the monthly board meetings which include the college presidents and one delegate are cancelled should one of the colleges not be able to attend. If we were to let the record of attendance serve as an indicator of the colleges' commitment to the Consortium, it is imperative to note that only one meeting in the past five years has been missed.

STATE, REGIONAL PLANNING AND COORDINATION

With the increased concern for accountability in higher education as well as diminishing inflation-marked dollars returning to both public and private schools, efforts in many states are being made to regionally plan and co-ordinate institutions for post-secondary education. The Federal Government's statuatory mandate for establishing 1202 Commissions in each state, though only funded in token, indicate the direction in which educational planning is moving.

The establishment of voluntary consortia has proven to be quite effective in developing some state and regional co-ordination of educational institutions and Illinois, New York, Pennsylvania and Virginia have taken the lead in this movement. (Grupe, 1973)

In Ohio, the 1974 Legislature has appropriated over one million dollars to private colleges for their assistance in providing both facilities and faculty to teach courses to students presently enrolled in the public university system. Though only a modest beginning, and possibly a legal challenge to the funding of private institutions with public tax dollars, the immediate problems of overcrowding in certain course areas

in the public sector, and the drastic financial plight of several small private institutions has been temporarily corrected. Along the same lines, the AICUM in Massachusetts continually, though up to this point with only negative results, has sought to improve the financial position of the eighty-six private colleges and universities in the Commonwealth through State subsidies. The question of expansion of the public institutions while empty classroom space remains in the private colleges is a significant one. Lines of communication between the opposing forces at least remain open, and Massachusetts' residents are eagerly awaiting the newly appointed Governor's stand on the issue. (Fox, 1974)

In Florida, a major effort between the public and private institutions has been discussed in the consortium literature. The Common Course Numbering System in the State University System (SUS) and the Independent Colleges and Universities of Florida has been noted as the beginning of formal mechanisms for joint efforts toward improving statewide education effectiveness. Other regional efforts include facilities, equipment and personnel sharing at the University of Miami, Nova and Florida Institute of Technology; cooperative programs in allied health between Barry College and Florida International University; state appropriations of subsidies on a per student basis to the University of Miami Medical School as a cooperative member with the two state supported medical institutions at the University of Florida

Gainesville, and the University of South Florida, Tampa. (Grupe, 1974)

Regional programs shunning state geographical boundaries exist in New England and Ohio. In Wellesley, Massachusetts a consortium was formed during the 1950's to research the expansion and program development of the area's post-secondary public education facilities in terms of economics and number of projected students within certain curricula. Over five hundred courses of study are reported to be available in the New England areas seventy-one public colleges. Cross registration, acceptance of credit transfer and less duplication of courses and facilities have resulted from this regional approach to planning. (Plehn, 1972)

Two Kentucky colleges and several colleges in Ohio including the University of Cincinnati have formed a bi-state consortium and have initiated broader curricula offerings through cross registration, common calendars, and have proposed the formation of a health maintenance organization. Only through such coordination and cooperation could the latter proposal ever become a reality. (Grupe, 1974)

EXPANSION OF SERVICES AND FACILITIES

The numbers of consortia coming into existence for the expansion of services and facilities at educational institutions is extensive. Two areas, computer and data processing systems and library cooperatives are extremely fast growing and deserve some examination.

The colleges of the St. Lawrence Valley have joined forces in a cooperative to specifically establish a common computing center. Each of the small institutions evaluated themselves and found the common problems of lack of funds and a low level of sophistication in their present data processing systems. Five goals were set forth and have all have been met to this date: 1. increase hardware and software capabilities of the present systems; 2. establish a single site for a computing center; 3. maximize resources designated for computing services; 4. increase computer accessibility; and 5. share costs among the member institutions. (Grupe, 1973)

Similar programs for maximizing efficiency and cost effectiveness of large scale computer systems have been undertaken by consortia of educational institutions in West Virginia and by the entire state education system in Minnesota where a most sophisticated system was installed to meet the combined needs of: 1. The State Department of Education;

2. State Universities; 3. State Colleges; 4. State community Colleges. The efficiency of the system in the first year of operation was noted to be "unbelievable". (Hango, 1973)

Eastern Michigan University's Library Orientation Instruction Exchange (LOEX) was established in 1972 as a clearinghouse for information and materials relating to academic library orientation and instruction. Its objectives are to facilitate communication among academic libraries with orientation and instruction programs; 2. assist libraries interested in developing such programs; and 3. aid libraries in their research endeavors and to further their education in orientation on an informal basis. LOEX is now a cooperative project with over two hundred member libraries in the United States and Canada, and has recently received a grant toward establishing the system on a nation-wide basis. (Patterson, 1974)

Computerized library cataloging in a system under the direction of the Ohio College Library Center has reached an unprecedented annual rate of 1,600,000 volumes. During the 1972-73 year, the Center printed for distribution to member libraries about seven million catalogue cards. So efficient is this system, that a competitor - the New Engalnd Library Information Network (NELNET) announced at its annual meeting that it will no longer try to replicate the OCLC system in New England. A move was put forth to acquire a

teleprocessing computer for the immediate purpose of "enhancing efficiency and stabilizing costs by joining OCLC. A quarter million dollar grant under the Library Services and Construction Act has enabled eleven libraries in western Pennsylvania to install Ohio College Library Center terminals and also become members of this growing system. (Patterson, 1974)

CONCLUDING REMARKS AND SUMMARY

As this paper has illustrated the interest in formation and the actual existence in numbers of voluntary consortia in American higher education is extremely significant. Expanding upon Bradley's (1971) observations, this author believes that consortia exist for the following reasons:

1. Expanded student and faculty opportunities; and better facilities;
2. Promotion of greater managerial efficiency and cost effectiveness;
3. Flexibility for experimentation, change, research;
4. Exchange of ideas and greater dissemination of knowledge;
5. Entrepreneurship in grantsmanship and articulation

Readers of this study should not make the erroneous assumption that consortia are the panacea for the maladies pervading modern-day education. Indeed, with the creation of a consortium a whole new and unique set of problems and relationships come into being. Grupe outlines three particularly common examples of such difficulties: 1. consortium have no inherent ability to elicit more creative education changes than normally emerge from colleges independently; 2. consortium programs may be peripheral to and sometimes in conflict with institutional priorities; and 3. consortia are primarily organizational solutions to organizational problems. (1974)

In a search of this literature other significant barriers to inter-institutional cooperation in higher education might be categorized:

1. weak commitment by chief executives
2. insufficient communication
3. geographic dispersion
4. lack of funds, and poor allocation
5. excessive diversity
6. multiple loyalties of members
7. special obligations to members
8. lack of enthusiasm and institutional stagnation
9. lack of central staff expertise
10. lack of faculty and administrative participation.

The author believes, however, that the idea of con-consortia is something whose time has come (Elliot, 1973) and that they must be established and maintained with the following caution:

> "Oft expectation fails, and most oft there
> Where most of it promises; and oft hits
> Where hope is coldest and despair most sits."[1]

To the extent that systems change only in response to outside influences, consortia can become useful for creating a discomforture essential to the search for and eventual acceptance of change.

The Consortium idea may prevent further weakening of the private institutions in their financial distress as society has been increasingly deaf to small voices. As Elliot

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[1] Shakespeare, William , All's Well that Ends Well, Sc. II, 145.

states, we must now consider a steady-state philosophy in American higher education today rather than one of continued growth. No longer are great sums of money flowing to institutions from philanthropic organizations, alumni, and industry, and students are no longer in the seemingly never ending supply as in the past years.

In order for institutions to keep their heads above water a philosophy of inter-institutional coordination and cooperation must be adopted. No longer may each school try to compete against the others in facilities and number of offerings as it would in athletics. The necessities must be distinguished from the nice to have items, and academic programs must be realistic, balanced, and cost effective.

With these strict limitations in mind, though, colleges and universities are charged with the task of serving a more diverse, more demanding, and, indeed, more sophisticated student body. This charge may be met head on most effectively, and efficiently if the idea of inter-institutional cooperation is adopted.

> As de Tocqueville so aptly stated: "one law which seems to be more precise and clear than all others...if men are to remain civilized - or to become so, the art of associating together must grow and grow.
> The time is drawing near when man will be less and less able to produce for himself, alone, the necessaries of life."

As we have seen, consortium activities in American higher might be appropriately termed " a mixed bag"; that is, a change

from the traditionally defined phenomenon called consortium to an approach, a technique for dealing with modern-day educational problems, and coping with the almost daily changes in post-secondary education that are coming in the future. Cooperation can take place anywhere, though, just as long as there are people and organizations willing, quite simply, to cooperate.

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